



The Bethel Courier.

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Bethel Historical Society



Broad Street c. 1910

MEMORIES OF BROAD STREET

by Margaret Herrick Oakes

(Editor's Note: Margaret Herrick Oakes is the daughter of the late Judge Addison E. and Mary Chase Herrick and spent her childhood on Broad Street during the first decades of the twentieth century. The widow of Clyde Oakes, she is a retired state employee living in Augusta. The following is an edited version of letters and taped comments by Mrs. Oakes.)

It was the fashion to go to the White Mountains for summer vacation. Taking boarders was quite the accustomed thing for ladies in straitened circumstances of good family to do. They didn't lose any caste over it, and they were very good cooks and had lovely houses. Aunt Melissa and Uncle Gilbert Tuell took Dr. Gehring's patients as boarders. They had several distinguished people at one time or another, but of course distinguished people were a dime a dozen on Broad Street when I was little. These were mostly college professors and a scattering of millionaires. The professors were the first ones that came; they were the ones that started it all. Then as it got fashionable, the New York society people came. One winter I remember we moved out and went to the Inn and Ogden Mills (later Secretary of the Treasury in the Hoover Administration), who had married the stepdaughter of W. K. Vanderbilt, rented our house that winter. Miss Jane Addams of Hull House spent a summer at the Tuell's. She was not a patient but her close friend Miss Mary Smith was. Miss Smith was very fond of Bethel and induced Miss Addams to come.

Mr. William Fuller lived at the Inn. He had a

BROAD STREET COMMEMORATED ON JUNE 2

At the regular meeting of the Society on June 2, members of the Education and Research Committee presented a program on Broad Street history using slides of many old photographs and the results of the historic survey. An exhibit on the street and the common also opened on this date. Forthcoming will be a booklet providing a walking tour of the area as well as a scale model of the Common during the Centennial of the Indian Raid of 1781.

BROAD STREET CONSIDERED FOR NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Members of the Education and Research Committee have conducted a historic survey of Broad Street and have submitted the information to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for nomination as a national historic district. The street with its rich history and its harmonious blend of architectural styles would appear to be a likely prospect for this important designation. Acceptance in no way affects the rights of property owners but does protect the area from the negative impact of federally funded programs and makes structures within eligible for federal matching restoration funds.

bedroom with a fireplace in it I remember, and after that he bought the Wright Cottage. He married one of Dr. Gehring's patients. He was living at the Inn in 1917 and had his own valet. This valet was an Englishman and he went off to war and was killed. The Fullers later left; they wanted something

gayer and more fashionable, and then Mr. Bingham bought the Wright cottage.

I knew Mr. Bingham well; I used to love to waltz with him. You see, until it appeared in the Boston papers that he was the richest man in Maine, he lived just like anybody else. Then when the big headline came out "Unknown Is Maine's Richest" with an extensive story about Mr. Bingham, everybody started deluging him with begging letters and he could no longer live his own life. He went into a shell. He was a wonderful man; he used to do a hesitation waltz, and I used to like to do it with him. He went to all the dances, and also played the violin beautifully. He was a delightful genuine aristocrat.

Miss Mary True was a very remarkable person, probably one of the most distinguished people ever to live in Bethel. She was a teacher of the deaf. She went to live with the Hubbard family and taught their daughter Mabel from the time she was a young girl. Mabel Hubbard later married Alexander Graham Bell. The Bell family remained close friends of Miss True until she died.

Miss True was amusing, funny, gay and sharp, and I remember one time she was walking along the street and I called over to a little girl, while Sylvia Swan (Conroy) and I were playing, "Come over and play with Sib and I." Overhearing me, Miss True said, "Margaret, would you say come over and play with I?", and I replied, "No." She then said, "Well, don't say come over and play with Sib and I." I've never forgotten that, and that's a mistake that is made constantly and it irritates me to this day.

Miss True was always a teacher. The house, she told me, was named "Delinda" after the wife of the original owner, a Chapman. The place had great charm, like its owner. Miss True and her brother wanted to entertain some of the famous people who were guests of the Gehrings (their half-sister) and what did they do, but Miss True cooked up a big pot of Irish stew and had a delicious old-fashioned meal. The guests all filed through the kitchen and got served, and sat around this delightful old house, eating—no servants, no pretense, and my mother said she never heard more brilliant conversation anywhere. Miss True's brother "Major" was a "fun" person. Young people loved him and he was included in their parties even though he was quite old. He had been a private in the Civil War. I don't why he was called "Major".

Much of the social life of the street revolved around the patients of Dr. Gehring and the rest of us were in it or about our business. Mr. William J. Upson had his barn converted into a beautiful music room and theater for amateur theatricals and shows. He had one of the first of the really fine automatic pianos. Before that, as long ago as I can remember, Al Rowe came to that house summers with his family. He lived in Roxbury, Massachusetts and had made a lot of money selling liquor, perfectly legitimately. He and his wife were very nice people. Mr. Rowe had a big lovely driving horse, and a surry plus a black coachman. Then one year the coachman got drunk and they fired him, and that was a character gone out of Broad Street. He'd been coming for years.

The library building was where Judge Enoch Foster had his law office, before he went to Portland. Foster lived next door in what was later

known as the Straw house. In later years after moving to Portland, he was a very dramatic character. He wore a cape and was very stern and tall and handsome. He had a little Pomeranian dog that he carried everywhere with him. I recall my father saying that Judge Foster was going to Europe, and he had some new luggage, and my father went there and the judge was kicking his new luggage down the stairs. My father asked, "What are you doing that for?" and Mr. Foster replied, "I don't want to look as if I'd never travelled before."

There was a pie closet in Judge Foster's house down in the cellar. Mrs. Foster used to make a quantity of pies in the fall and put them down there and I suppose they must have frozen and they'd have pies all winter. An early deep freeze!

When the Dan Hastings family and William and Agnes Straw returned to Bethel from Montana, they brought their horses and sheep dogs with them. I was often in and out of their houses. Mr. Straw was very fond of me and I of him. Once I told him what I thought of Democrats. I was down in his cellar sucking sweet cider out of a bung hole in a barrel with a straw, and something came up about the September election and I hauled off and let him have it with what my father had said about Democrats. Mr. Straw was about rolling in the aisles, and I couldn't understand it. When I came home and said, "Papa, I told Mr. Straw what you said about Democrats", my father collapsed and laughed until he cried. When I asked him what was the matter, he said, "Straw's one of the strongest Democrats in Bethel!"

The Tuells all were wonderful people, with beautiful eyes. I was especially fond of Aunt Melissa and Uncle Gilbert Tuell. Dr. Tuell, Auntie Merrill, told me, was a gay young blade, so to speak, before he married, and that at one time he had a dance at the old hotel, and he said that there would be a light supper. So everybody got to dance and then they got hungry and went into the dining room to supper, and there were a lot of lamps on the table and that was the "light" supper.

My mother wasn't very well when I was a child, and this is perhaps why I roamed around and everybody had a hand in raising me, especially Aunt Melissa Tuell and Fred's mother, Auntie Merrill. She was a "scream", a delightful soul. One time Fred put a number of things out on the line to air, and he included his best fall overcoat. One of the town characters came by and asked Auntie Merrill for any clothes she wanted to get rid of. She told him there were some old things out on the line that Fred had put out. So he walked off with Fred's new overcoat and Fred had to go after it. Auntie Merrill thought it was terribly funny.

Another family that lived on Broad Street was the Louis Mercier family, his wife was a Twitchell. Mr. Mercier was a section hand on the railroad and the house stood next to the Prospect Hotel. It was not well kept up as Mrs. Mercier was not well, and after her sudden death (she died of a heart attack after being frightened by an elephant during a thunderstorm at the circus) the family scattered and the house was eventually torn down. Charles Tuell and I smashed many of the windows with snowballs when it was empty.

Tris Durell was a most interesting man who could do anything with his hands. He would help

us out by doing all kinds of work. Once we had our whole lower half of the house repapered and he, my sister and I took off the old paper. Mr. Durell kept us laughing for days and interested, too, in books about art he brought up and reminiscences of his life before he came to Bethel. He had a little shop called the "Poly Shop" where he fixed bicycles and everything else. He was a dear man. Nowadays he would have a craft shop and be right in current style.

I spent time all over Broad Street. When I was quite young my mother said, "You must not go to the neighbor's houses and beg for cookies." However, my mother always confided in me. She must have sensed that I had a great interest in people. The whole thing as I look back is like looking back under glass. It's something that I reflect upon and think just couldn't be.

WHITE MOUNTAIN HISTORY COURSE GREAT SUCCESS

The Society's spring course, "White Mountain History" conducted by regional historian Randy Bennett, Chairman of the Education and Research Committee, exceeded all records for enrollment since the beginning of course offerings in 1975. Nearly seventy persons ranging in age from high school students to the retired participated in the five week program that included a field trip, hike, guest lecturers and dinner at the Philbrook Farm in Shelburne, N. H. Topics covered included early history, Indians, explorers, Bethel's relationship with the White Mountains, Franconia Notch, Appalachian Mountain Club, logging history, Mount Washington, and White Mountain literature. A field trip was taken to the former community of Hastings in Evans Notch and a hike up Pine Mountain which provides an excellent view of the region became the highlight of the course. Among the guest lecturers were Walter Graff, Program Director of the Appalachian Mountain Club; Nuna Montgomery, Director, White Mountain Museum of Forest History; Donald Clymer, National Forest Service; Alfred Oxtun, Mount Washington Observatory; Walter Wright, Curator of Rare Books, Baker Library, Dartmouth College.

It is anticipated that this highly successful course will be offered again in the future.

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

New life members of the Society are Mrs. Jeanette Sanborn Potsaid of Hanover, Massachusetts, Bethel native and generous donor to the Society and Mrs. Pearlina McMillin of Bethel, former Treasurer, currently Trustee, Assistant Treasurer, and accountant of the Society.

Membership in all categories is now well over two hundred. Nearly forty have joined the ranks since the publication of the last issue of "The Courier".

QUESTIONNAIRE

Other days for the monthly meeting have been suggested. Do you feel Thursday is the best choice?

If not, what day?

Please clip and send your comments to the Editor, Bethel Historical Society Newsletter, Box 12, Bethel, Maine 04217.

EDITOR'S CORNER

In this second issue of "The Courier" there have been a number of features added as well as several changes in format. The greatest change perhaps is the addition of two pages making a total of eight. The response to the first issue was so enthusiastic that it was felt an enlargement was fully warranted. As always your comments and suggestions are very welcome.

PRESIDENTS COLUMN

As we near the third anniversary of the dedication of the Moses Mason House, it might be well to highlight some of the progress of the Society to date:

- (a) museum furnished, collection now containing several hundred items all generously donated
 - (b) publication of special edition and four pamphlets, plus semi-annual newsletter
 - (c) three major exhibits, many minor ones
 - (d) hosting of two major conferences, many small ones
 - (e) archives built and collections assembled in acid free boxes
 - (f) grants received from the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums, National Endowment for the Humanities and the Maine State Committees on the Arts and Humanities for microfilming, exhibits and conference
 - (g) membership growth from approximately sixty to over two hundred
 - (h) active participation of over sixty volunteers in guiding, gardening, research, exhibit production, cataloging, etc.
 - (i) course offerings in crafts instruction and local history
 - (j) accounting system established on a professional basis with an annual audit
 - (k) provision of tours and special programs, especially school groups, for some 1,500 annually
- Much more remains to be done with historic surveys, research, upgrading the collections, obtaining new members, publications, etc., but I feel we can be proud of our record to date.

Have a good summer,

John J. Willard, Jr., President

HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROGRAM 1977

July 7, 1977—Dr. Hilda Fife, Maine Old Cemetery Assn., "Old Cemeteries: Our Heritage and Our Responsibility". This meeting will be held at the East Bethel Church.

August 4, 1977—Homespun. Members of the Museum Committee will present a program on homespun cloth. Films "Pioneer Spinning and Weaving", "Homespun", "Colonial Clothing 1700-1770".

September 1, 1977—Annual Meeting. Pot Luck Supper. Slides of old photographs. Pot luck supper will begin at 6:30.

October 6, 1977—"What's It". If possible everyone attending should bring an old item which had an unusual purpose or character.

November 3, 1977—Archeology in local history. Films: "Doorway to the Past" and "The Williamsburg File."

December 1, 1977—Old Fashioned Christmas.

All meetings will be held in the meeting room of the Moses Mason House unless otherwise noted and will begin promptly at 7:30 p. m.

BOOK REVIEW

Sunday River Sketches: A New England Chronicle

All who have known the Sunday River valley from Swan's Corner, where the present attractive residence of Alden Kennett once housed the North Bethel Post Office in the home of Charles Swan, to the Owen Demeritt place in the "Wild Land" of Ketchum will be grateful to those responsible for the recent appearance of "Sunday River Sketches: A New England Chronicle." In 1947 Martha Fifiel Wilkins presented to the Bethel Library three loose-leaf notebooks, together with photographs, clippings, maps, and drawings, the result of many years of research into the background of her own family and other early settlers of Newry and Ketchum, or Riley Plantation. The trustees of the Bethel Library Association gave permission for the publication of the papers. And Randy L. Bennett has ably organized the material into five chapters: I Historical Origins; II The Fifiels: A personal Narrative; III Newry, Maine; IV Annals; and V Family Histories. A table of more than seventy illustrations, one of maps and diagrams, and a general index, as well as an excellent index of names add greatly to the usefulness of the book, in which Mrs. Wilkins has, in Randy Bennett's words, "preserved the story of a forgotten corner of New England (and) of a Yankee way of life."

The name Ketchum comes from Phebe Ketchum, an early grantee of the area, who about 1820 deeded her land to Riley Plantation, named for Luke Reily (or Riley) whose grave stone in Sunday River Cemetery states that he "removed from Ireland in 1789." He apparently lived first near the head waters of Bull Branch in a settlement known as "Bumfaggin" and later moved down Sunday River to the place in Newry now owned by Robert Bean.

Mrs. Wilkins gives a delightful account of her Fifiel family in Riley Plantation. Although born in Methuen, Massachusetts, she spent thirty summers with her grandparents and her Aunt Jule in the Alonzo Fifiel house. She makes her readers really see this house inside and out. The diary kept by Aunt Jule reveals the hard life of a farm woman at the turn of the century, and yet at her death in 1909 twenty-one cats had to be chloroformed and buried in the cats' graveyard behind the house.

Of special interest in the "Annals" chapter are the sections dealing with the Fifiel Family Graveyard; with Down East Sayings; and with Artist Bridge, so called because the artist, John J. Enneking, a guest at Miss Locke's, used to sketch near it, and in a shallow place in the river nearby, baptisms and communal sheep washings were held.

Introducing the last chapter of nearly forty "Family Histories" is Augustus Littlehale's map of Home Sites on Sunday River with its accompanying notes. A glance at this map answers questions raised from my childhood on by seeing the many abandoned cellar holes in Ketchum and on the side of Barker Mountain. Who could have lived in these places so far from civilization, I wondered. The map tells us who these people were and where they lived. Martha Fifiel Wilkins tells us how they lived: raising their own food—cattle, sheep, pigs, hens, and vegetables—haymaking, logging, hunting, and fishing; attending town meetings and giving money and

AREA PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

(See Dec. 1976 Newsletter for a comprehensive list.)

"Henry: Man of Aroostook County, Maine" by Milton T. Lufkin. Story of a Rumford man turned Aroostook pioneer. Photos, 256 pp., hardbound. Order from Caribou Historical Society, Caribou, Me. \$10.00

"Hanover, Maine: Settled in 1774; Incorporated in 1843." Produced for Bicentennial Celebration, 1976. 36 pp., softcover. Order from Mr. Frank Worcester, Hanover, Me.

"District Schools of Wilton, Maine" 1803-1890 by Lauriston F. Noyes and Rollo E. Gould (Wilton Printed Products, 1976) 44 pp., illustrated, softbound. Order from Wilton Hist. Soc., Box 499, Wilton, Me. 04294. \$2.50

"The Saco River: A History and Canoeing Guide" by Viola Sheehan. 73 pp., illus., softbound. Order from: Saco River Corridor Assn., Riverbend Farm, Simpson Road, Saco, Me. 04072. \$4.25

"History of the Town of Peru" (Rumford Publishing Co. 1971) by Mary Searles Vaughn. 124 pp., softbound, \$3.00 and the "Register, Inhabitants of Town of Peru," 30 pp. \$2.50. From author, Peru, 04272.

"The World of C. A. Stephens" by Rev. Ronald G. Whitney. Biography of Norway, Me. writer, scientist and inventor, 200 pp., softbound. Order from Waynor Publishing Co., 152 Sumner Ave., Springfield, Mass. 01108. \$9.95 postpaid.

"Norway Salutes Our Country's Bicentennial," etc., pamphlet prepared in 1976. Order from the Norway Historical Society, Norway, Me. 04268. \$1.00 postpaid.

"Old Times in Woodstock" by Jefferson C. Gallison, M. D., from Ruby Emery, Bryant Pond, Maine 04219, \$6.00 plus 50c postage and handling.

"History of Hamlin's Gore" by Ruby Emery, from the author, Bryant Pond, Maine 04219, \$5.00 plus 50c postage and handling.

Available from the Bethel Historical Society, Bethel, Maine 04217.

Booklets (50c each postpaid):

"Molly Ockett"

"Dr. Moses Mason and His House"

"The Family Farm"

"Made in Bethel"

"Bethel's Broad Street"

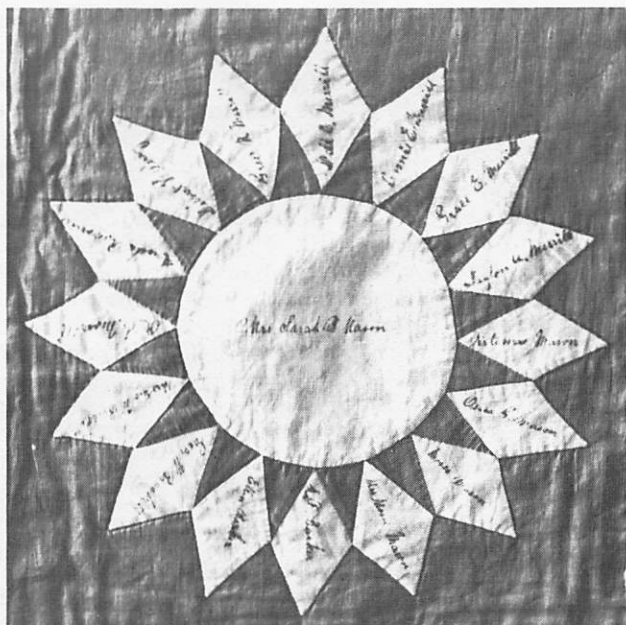
Also available: "Adventures in Maine History"—a listing of Historic Museums, Historical Societies and Sites in the State of Maine. Produced by the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums. \$2.95 postpaid.

"Special Edition—Bethel Oxford County Citizen—1974." In commemoration of the dedication of the Moses Mason House and the 200th Anniversary of the first Settlement in Bethel (1774). \$1.00 postpaid.

labor towards building a schoolhouse. We can only be grateful to her for preserving this record of a way of life that is gone.

—Ruth Crosby

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A square of an autograph quilt generously presented the Society by Mr. Albert Brown of Rumford Center and his sister, Mrs. Ruth Smith of Northampton, Mass., is shown above. This quilt was made by the ladies of the Mason Church about 1880 as a fund raising venture. Those persons paying a dollar got their names inscribed in the center of the square. For a quarter it was possible to have it written on a smaller section circling the center.

Autograph quilts, like friendship and album quilts were long popular with earlier generations. The name or inscriptions were usually written with India ink by someone with a good penmanship or occasionally embroidered over the ink. These quilts have often been designed to honor a local person of stature such as a minister. At times because of information recorded they have also served a useful purpose in genealogical research.

SOCIETY HOSTS VOLUNTEER TRAINING CONFERENCE

On April 22-23, the Society hosted a two day workshop sponsored by the New England Conference of the American Association of Museums and the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums with a grant from the Maine State Commission of the Arts and Humanities. The workshop was designed for small museums and historic houses, emphasizing volunteer recruitment, training methods and support programs. Participants came from all six New England states and the faculty included Elizabeth Gilmore Holt, well-known art historian; Frances Peabody, chairwoman, Tate House, Stroudwater; Ellen Endter, Assistant to the Director, Portland Museum of Art; Merrie Blocker, Director of Education, DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, Mass.; John Gamble, Supervisor of Interpretive Training, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut; Caroline Stide, Director, Museum of the Concord Antiquarian Society, Concord, Massachusetts; Stanley Howe, Curator, Moses Mason House, Bethel. The Society received many compliments on its facilities and hospitality.

MOSES MASON'S DAY BOOK

A recent gift of importance to the Society was Moses Mason's Day Book. This is a long narrow calf-bound volume in which the Dr. kept a daily record of his accounts. Occasionally he ruled lines between items but in general he wrote, apparently often in haste, on the plain page with no clear distinction made between receipts and expenditures. Generally, from the nature of the item it is possible to distinguish between what the Dr. paid and what he received. The first day on which the book was used was September 25, 1826; the last was December 25, 1844.

The handwriting throughout is recognizably Dr. Mason's but is less legible than the occasional receipts, or other notes which we have from his papers. He wrote rapidly with a difficult code of abbreviations. In many places the ink is badly faded.

In the early years of the period which the Day Book covers it was also a medical record book, combining a casual indication of the treatment given with the amount received. Usually the item is distinguishable as a medical item by mention of a drug or remedy dispensed. "Camomile" was used to stimulate the liver; "sod. niter", according to my Mother, was a kidney aid. "Sal soda" which appears often was an aid to digestion. Camphor was used for colds and to rub on the temples for headaches and "cinchona" or quinine was very popular and effective for fever and colds. At times Dr. Mason notes only that he gave "Pills No. 5" or "Pills No. 10". In 1827 he notes opening an abscess for David Daniels. His medical practice does not appear to have been a major interest and the items of this nature are most prominent in the first few pages of the book—mainly before 1830. In every case he records the treatment under the name of the head of the family even though it was for another member; the very first item for example is to Deacon Barker, for "Sal soda for Seth and Sara".

Much of interest about Dr. Mason's daily life can be deduced from the Day Book. He records regularly that he has received payment from the Town of Bethel for "making taxes" or "school money", which I interpret as meaning that he served as an assessor; usually he was paid a dollar a day for this job. From time to time he is compensated for "acknowledging a deed" perhaps as a Notary Public. Fairly regularly he is asked to write a deed or draft a petition; the Town of Bethel on June 16, 1829 paid him \$.50 for writing a petition for the discontinuing of the road by Dustin's Ferry (Near Fiskes in East Bethel). On the reverse side of a slip of paper found in the book as a scratch pad is draft of a petition to the Judge of Probate for the widow of Daniel Twitchell "to respectfully ask an allowance out of the personal property of her late husband."

Other recorded transactions are equally revealing about early Bethel life. The Doctor often hired a man for a day's work—at first for \$.75 a day, later at one dollar. Quite often he bought a quarter of veal from Deacon Barker or later Pinckney Burnham. Less frequently he bought pork and from time to time bulk vegetables—a bushel of beans, four bushels of corn, a bushel of wheat etc. He seemed to handle the purchase of large items of food only—there is never any mention of table

vegetables or such items as hens; presumably Mrs. Mason handled these purchases.

From time to time the doctor lent money but at least as recorded in the Day Book for small sums only. John Annas for example borrowed \$3.30 and repaid this debt with \$.60 interest—no indication of the time during which he had the money. At another time he charged Jonathan Blake \$.50 "for the use of my waggen." In the later period of the Day Book, there were a number of very involved arrangements about sheep. On October 27, 1844 for example Dr. Mason arranged with Rufus Grover, for Grover to keep eight sheep from which Dr. Mason was to have part of the wool. (No figures are given for this transaction; settlement was apparently in the distant future). His Congressional service is reflected as an interruption of his usual business. On December 5, 1833 for example, "This day left for Washington" and on July 18, 1834 "returned from Washington." Similar entries appear in the fall and spring or summer of the other years of his Congressional tenure.

The amounts of money involved seem small but are consistent. There is a receipt for \$.30 for taxes for a lot in Mason township. The last item in the book is for a pound of potatoes and a pound of lard, together apparently \$.25. On the endpiece is a fascinating entry "The Expenses of Building a Bridge across Pleasant River in the town of Mason by Moses Mason 1843". The total spent on the bridge was \$57.86 (excluding timber for which no figure is given).

Paid James Russell for	
Abutments and other	22.86
Paid Cash for Oxen	3.50
Paid Hastings for his work on	
Iron	2.00
Paid Cyrus Mills for Timber	
Paid Johnson Mills for	
Plow and Labour	12.00
Paid Capt. Nath. Twitchell	4.00
Paid for Labour fitting up the	
Abutment and way the	
Bridge	6.00
Paid for repairing the	
Abutment	7.50
	57.86

The names which occur over and over again are the names of the early Bethel history—Grover, Mason, Russell, Kimball, Barker, Hastings, Robinson, Bonney, Burbank, Chapman, Twitchell, and many more. A serious student will find this Day Book valuable source material for the economic and social life of the early nineteenth century. For Bethel residents it brings to life the daily activities of our early families, selling beans, pasturing and shearing their sheep, struggling to find money for taxes and seeking relief for their colds, fevers and troubled digestion. —Margaret Joy Tibbetts

GENEALOGICAL NOTES

The answer to a query concerning the date and place of death of Moses A. Hastings was obtained from Mrs. Betsy Goss of Bangor. Moses, son of Major Gideon A. Hastings of Broad Street, Bethel, died in Lancaster, N. H., September 9, 1923 and was long Clerk of Courts of Coos County.

Genealogical inquiries or information should be sent to the Society, Box 12, Bethel, Maine 04217.

DR. TRUE AS HISTORIAN

The productive years in the life of Dr. Nathaniel Tuckerman True (1850-1884) were a propitious time for antiquarian efforts. Indeed the ground work of what we know today of Bethel's beginnings is in large part the result of this approximately thirty year period when his awareness of the importance of local history spawned several major contributions to the historiography of western Maine.

Two papers worthy of mention, a manuscript letter on Bethel history written by James Grover for William Williamson's "History of Maine" (1832) and the Segar narrative of the 1781 Indian Raid published in 1825 allegedly arranged by Parson Gould were the only visible antecedents of True's first literary work, the "History of Bethel," printed in serial form in the "Bethel Courier" between 1859 and 1861. True shared with other "patrician" historians, mainly professional people who viewed their literary achievements as an avocation, a concern for thorough research, meticulous transcription, and fair and accurate reporting. On the local level he readily exchanged ideas with such notables as William Willis and Edward Elwell of Portland, Thomas Moulton of Porter, David Noyes of Norway, Israel Washburn, Jr. of Livermore and George Whitefield Chapman of Gilead. On a broader basis, his writing appears to indicate admiration and emulation of the works of Francis Parkman and Henry Adams.

A Pownal native born in 1812, trained at Bowdoin for a medical career, True soon became absorbed with "matters foreign to the sick room" and in balancing an interest in research and writing with that of medicine, chose teaching as a profession. Still, during his term as principal of the Academy at Monmouth (1837-46) and that at Bethel (1848-61), one finds frequent mention of his labors in botany, mineralogy, geology, and chemistry, as well as his dedication to agricultural societies (he helped found Maine's first Farmer's Club in 1853).

Joseph Williamson's voluminous "Bibliography of the State of Maine" (1896) provides an indication of the range of Dr. True's writings, but the list is anything but exhaustive. His promotion and eventual documentation of the "antiquarian supper" at Bethel in 1855 was no doubt one of his first published articles. Thereafter, they appear extensively in the "Oxford Democrat", the "Portland Transcript", the "Lewiston Journal" and later the "Courier".

Beyond the newspaper essays, his pen produced innumerable articles for scholarly journals. Some, such as his "New Localities of Minerals in Maine" (1863) and "Grooved Boulders in Bethel, Me." (1862), both printed in the "Proceedings of the Portland Society of Natural History," combined scientific inquiry with historical investigation. Here, the legendary "Cabinet of Minerals" at Gould's and several highly descriptive passages on area geography undoubtedly succeeded in promoting Bethel and the Academy.

As an active member of the Maine Historical Society and a corresponding member of that in Wisconsin, Dr. True had access to a wealth of archival material, as well as published records of other towns and states. Thus it comes as no surprise that some dozen manuscripts written between 1877 and 1884 while he was head of schools at Bethel and Litchfield, Me., Gorham and Milan, N. H., found

their way into the recently-reprinted series "Old Times in North Yarmouth, Maine". Besides giving us some clues as to his genealogical background, the Doctor recalls his school days at North Yarmouth Academy in the 1830's, describing himself as "a raw, country lad, dressed in homespun." On a more humorous note, his comments on boarding-house life provide certain insights: "We cooked food when compelled to do so from sheer hunger, and washed the dishes from pure necessity, the safe rule being to do so when we could not well decide what was in them last." At the same time, True's defense over his dismissal from Gould's in 1861 surfaced in another article he wrote, "To secure position in society, there were certain prescribed grooves in which a man must walk, or he was ostracized." True's biographical sketch of Ezekiel Holmes (he succeeded Holmes as Editor of the "Maine Farmer", 1865-69) and his "History of the Press of Oxford County" in Griffin's "The Press of Maine" (1871) shed further light on his unique personality.

Like some of his Maine contemporaries, Dr. True was probably less an interpreter of history, than a recorder of it. The massive bulk of his 102 chapter "History of Bethel" (misnumbered as 97 chapters) is rather sketchy and reads poorly as a narrative, but nonetheless furnishes important information on land grants, the Androscoggin (it was Dr. True who advocated a steamer between Rumford Falls and Bethel in the 1860's), town meetings, church history and biography. In the "Preface," True makes special note of Dr. Mason's early efforts in collecting data (his "Historical Notes" were recently given to the Society), regarding him as a "co-laborer." Unfortunately, after enjoying a chapter on political history by Mason, the reader must burrow through twelve chapters on Dr. John Locke, apparently one of True's favorite citizens. Upon comparison, those familiar with the "History of Bethel" (1891) will find it a surprisingly similar rendition of the earlier work. Historians, rather than honoring Wm. B. Lapham as an author, should have examined more fully his tendency to extract liberally from predecessors.

Perhaps the largest area of Dr. True's interest, and one on which he was most widely known and acclaimed, was the Maine Indian. In fact, the first thirty-five chapters of his "History" were devoted to accounts of the Ossipee, Pequawket and Anasagunticook tribes with special emphasis on Indian language and its English translation. Among his contributions on the subject for periodicals were

"Names and Location of Tribes on the Androscoggin" ("Historical Magazine, 1864), "Collation of Geographical Names in the Algonkin Language" (Essex Institute Historical Collections, 1866), and "The Indians" ("Old Times," 1879). The story is told that his great collection of unpublished Indian manuscripts was sold to an archives after his death. In time, the bibliography of his writings now being compiled, may include these papers.

Commemorative motives prompted Dr. True to accept the role of orator at historical celebrations, mostly in Oxford County. On August 20, 1863, he spoke at the Fryeburg Centennial. In 1867 he was present and delivered an address at the marking of Mollockett's grave in Andover; when the 1874 Bethel Centennial occurred, centered around his Broad Street home, he prepared a lengthy speech which subsequently appeared in printed form. One year later he participated at the Waterford Centennial. During the 1881 Indian Raid Centennial, he gave a moving oration before a gathering in Kimball Park. If the municipalities failed to publish his protracted lectures, Dr. True usually saw to it that local newspapers did.

Second only to the "History of Bethel" in volume was True's 1882 "History of Gorham, N. H." published in successive issues of the "Gorham Mountaineer". True's remarks served to encourage further study on the topic and letters he received were quickly inserted into the text. His researches on Gorham were utilized later in the "History of Coos Co., N. H." (1888).

Throughout his life, Dr. True's concern with history was always to commemorate, to preserve, to collect, and to record. The destruction by fire of his Bethel home and its contents in 1896 will forever leave a dark void over parts of his life. However, after finishing his newspaper work on the "Bethel History", he deposited in 1862 a collection of original documents and pamphlets at the Maine Historical Society. Today, the "scrapbook" preserves some choice bits of the town's past—a plantation record of 1782, Eleazar Twitchell's account book (1785) and that of Jonathan Clark (1793-1802), Rev. Charles Frost's sketch of the Indian Raid, reports of the Bethel Farmer's Club and the "Maternal Association," a geological report on Puzzle Mt. in Newry dated 1859, as well as a map of the West Parish in 1800 and a copy of a paper printed on a cheese press by Charles and Henry L. Chapman. These items are carelessly placed with some pasted to pages and others simply laid between the

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Membership in the Society entitles you to:

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| (1) free admission to the museum | (4) special library and archival privileges |
| (2) special discounts at museum store | (5) semi-annual newsletter |
| (3) preferred rate for meeting room rental | |

To the Membership Committee: I am interested in becoming a member of the Society.

.....
Signature

Please check appropriate category and send your remittance to: Box 12, Bethel, Maine 04217

.....Sustaining \$2.50 (Individual)
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Life over 55 years \$75.00 couple
Life under 55 years \$100.00 single
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leaves. Through overuse, a number of "scraps" noted on page margins, now fail to appear.

Speaking at the "Reunion" of his students in 1884, Dr. True noted, "For fifty-two years . . . I have never known what it was to have a well-rested brain." If he faltered somewhat along the way, it was probably in his efforts to cover too much ground, ample cause for his recurring financial problems. More importantly though, True's surviving writings will assist future historians by furnishing valuable source material for studies in nineteenth-century American popular culture as well as Maine history in general. —R. H. Bennett

MRS. MOSES MASON'S SPONGE CAKE

"Take 5 eggs and a half a pound of loaf sugar, sift it, break the eggs upon the sugar and beat all together with a steel fork for half an hour—previously take the weight of two eggs and a half in flour—After you have beaten the eggs and sugar the time specified, grate in rind of a lemon, the juice may be added at pleasure, stir in the flour and pour it immediately into a lined tin with buttered paper and put it instantly into a rather cool oven."

BETHEL CITIZEN MICROFILMED

Through a matching grant from the Maine State Commission on the Arts and Humanities and the cooperation of the Bethel Public Library and Citizen Printers Inc., the Society is currently sponsoring a project of microfilming the entire span of the Bethel Citizen from its beginning in 1908 through 1976. Microfilming will not only preserve a vital historical resource but will make it available to researchers in the Moses Mason House's Eva Bean Research Room.

VOLUNTEERS FOR COMMITTEES NEEDED

Volunteers are needed for the various committees of the Society. Appointments are made following the annual meeting by the President with the approval of the Board of Trustees. Anyone wishing to serve on a committee or fulfill some special role, please notify the curator of the Moses Mason House prior to the annual meeting in September.

Bethel Historical Society
Box 12
Bethel, Maine 04217

BETHEL BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following is a list of books by Bethel people, about Bethel or Bethel people:

- William B. Lapham, "History of Bethel 1768-1890" (Augusta, Maine: Press of the Maine Farmer, 1891)
Eva Bean, "East Bethel Road (Bethel, Maine: Citizen Printers, 1959)
Francis Parkman, "The Gould Academy Story 1836-1976" (Gould Academy, Bethel, Maine: Gould Academy, 1976)
John George Gehring, "The Hope of the Variant" (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1923)
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Harriette F. Farwell, "Shaw Records" (Bethel, Maine: E. C. Bowler, 1904)
Mina Holway Caswell, "Ministry of Music: The Life of William Rogers Chapman" (Portland, Maine: The Southworth-Anthoenson Press, 1938)
Barbara G. Moore, "Hell, You Can Drive" (Andover, Maine: Ray's Art Shop, 1953)
Erma Thurston Young, "Yesterday and Today" (Manchester, Maine: Dirigo, 1953)
Phyllis Dock, "Little Hawk" (Hampden, Maine: Highlands Press, 1967)
Robert Herrick, "The Master of the Inn" (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911)
Ruth Crosby, "I Was a Summer Boarder" (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1966) and "From An Old Leather Trunk" (North Quincy, Massachusetts: Christopher Publishing House, 1974)
Suggestions for additions are most welcome and will be considered for inclusion in the next issue.

MOSES MASON MUSEUM TO OPEN JULY 1

On Friday July 1, the Moses Mason Museum will be open for the 1977 season. New hours will be in force this year. They are: Tuesday through Sunday, 1-4 p. m. The museum will continue to close Mondays. The afternoon hours have been extended and the morning opening dropped. It is hoped that these new times will prove more convenient to visitors.